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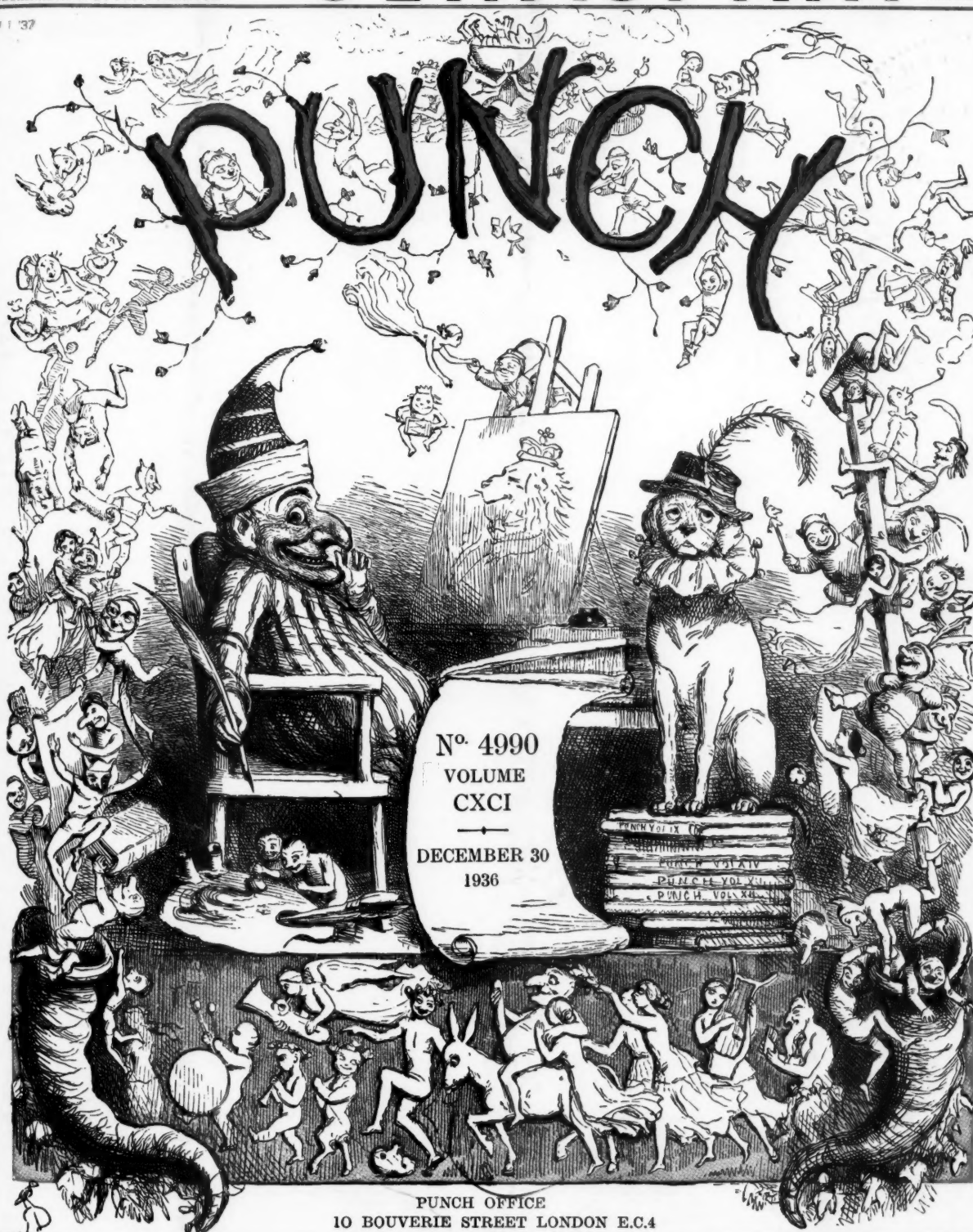
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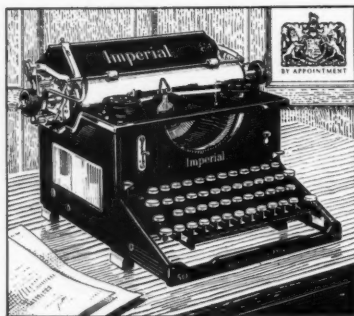


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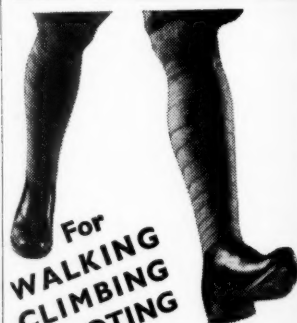
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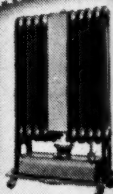
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'CENTRAL' RADIATORS

Charivaria

"THE public is expected to be polite to Post-Office employés," says an official. All the same we strongly condemn the action of the man who filled in the time of waiting by writing "PLEASE DO NOT TEASE THE ANIMALS" on a telegraph-form and fastening it to the grille.

★ ★ ★

MARIAM KASSA, one of the Abyssinian leaders, has submitted his grateful thanks to MUSSOLINI for the liberation of his country. The delay in sending the Spanish Reds' earnest and heartfelt tribute to FRANCO is shrouded in mystery.

★ ★ ★

A trade paper suggests that the piano may be extinct in a few years. In which case young people will have to find somewhere else to put the rings from their cocktail-glasses.



★ ★ ★

A writer in a women's journal remarks that even the most insignificant object about a house ought to have its definite use. Even if it is merely the writing of cheques.

★ ★ ★

A correspondent to a morning paper declares that it is the little men who have ruled the world. He does not mention who lifted him up to post the letter.

★ ★ ★

A play taken over from this country to the States was altered and given an unhappy ending. This occurred on the sixth night.

★ ★ ★

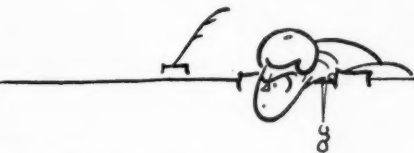
Temporary postmen helping to deal with the Christmas rush were not provided with uniforms. This of course made it very puzzling for the poor dogs.

★ ★ ★

A man of seventy-five boasts that he has never kissed anyone. He admits, however, that he once put a cross on a voting-paper.

★ ★ ★

A parrot in East London says "Heil, HITLER!" This is considered particularly surprising in view of the shape of its beak.



In broad daylight a man entered a London office and stole a clock. By some amazing mischance members of the staff were not watching it.

★ ★ ★

A boy who stole cake from a shop had eaten so much that he was unable to run when the police discovered him. You can't have your cake and beat it.

★ ★ ★

A critic of the theatre says that the gallery ought to be abolished. If you have tiers, prepare to shed them now.

★ ★ ★

"Take off your clothes, lie down in a hot bath, and what do you hear?" asks a doctor. The telephone-bell starting to ring in the hall.

★ ★ ★

A cow wandered from a Dorset dairy farm one evening recently and did not return until the early hours of the following morning. However, it *did* come home with the milk.

★ ★ ★

A gymnast points out that it is not everybody who can stand upside-down for two minutes without over-balancing. Some people, however, can do it on their heads.

★ ★ ★

Recent excavations at Ur have revealed tablets inscribed with what archæologists claim to be the oldest jokes in the world. It must be a pleasant change to see them written in Chaldean.

★ ★ ★

The Frenchwoman's cookery, as a writer on the subject of foreign fare reminds us, is proverbial. In fact she can't break eggs without making an omelette.

★ ★ ★

A daily paper says that the "Knock-knock" craze is gradually dying out in this country. So it will soon be time for some up-to-the-minute member of the Bench to inquire "What is 'Knock-knock'?"

History

THE following quotations from *Every Child's Book of the Past*, published in 2037, may help us to see the year that has just closed in a right perspective:—

"1936 will always be remembered as the year when Sir Oswald Mosley flew to Johannesburg wearing nothing but an Atlantic Blue Ribbon owing to the fact that Sir John Simon had borrowed his shirt. A mass meeting of Communists was held in the Crystal Palace to protest against this unconstitutional act, and so warm was the language used that the Palace was burned down, regretted by all.

"The election of a mongoose to the Chairmanship of the B.B.C. was received coldly by the public, and the matter was referred to the Milk Board; but it was felt that owing to the fact of the number of pigs produced at home falling far short of the minimum required, nothing could be done.

"Most of the State Papers having been destroyed in the fire at the Crystal Palace, the political history of the year is shrouded in mystery, but it seems probable that England was at this time ruled by a Council of Three, consisting of Mr. Anthony Eden, Lady Houston, D.B.E., and Sir William Morris, L.P.T.B. Some historians, however, are of opinion that some time during the year there was a General Election, at which a Popular Front was victorious,

led by a M. Blumwin, with a Mr. Skimpson as Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was this Mr. Skimpson who organised national Football Pools, with Free Divorces as prizes.

"In international affairs there was a Currency Agreement originated by the Australian Dried Fruits Board, and the usual number of Disagreements, including the famous Non-Intervention Disagreement, which was a great success and was expected to result in the appearance of Miss Gracie Fields in the New Year's Honours List. Under the Non-Intervention Disagreement Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin agreed not to interfere in the Test Matches between England and Australia unless other people interfered, but when Bradman slipped on the pavilion steps at Brisbane on a banana-skin with an odour of vodka Mussolini and Hitler felt that in the interests of fair play they were bound to insert itching-powder in the boots of the English team.

"The Abyssinian Empire, founded by the League of Nations, flourished greatly and became so civilised that Olympic Games were held during the year at Addis Ababa, where the British representatives in the athletic events came in a shade late.

"This caused concern to the Government, who decided that something must be done about the Physical State of the Rising Generation, and Milk Bars were opened in all the principal cities. Lord Beaverbrook kindly gave huge quantities of Icy Lotion for massaging the muscles of the populace. Income-tax was raised so that people would have less money to spend on harmful luxuries.

"On December 31st the year came to an end as usual, and it was generally felt that it happened none too soon."

It Springs Eternal

(Purely personal viewpoint, of course, but perhaps others also—)

1936

Was a queer bag of tricks
And too much of a mix.

1935

Was a year I had to strive
To keep even alive.

1934

Was, taking it broadly, a bore;
I didn't want an encore.

1933

Filled a lot of folk with glee,
But it was no good to me.

And there was a sort of hoodoo—
Dark dismally blue—
On 1932.

So will you tell me why
I

Still hope for heaven
From 1937?
I suppose I'm cuckoo,
But—I do!

H. B.

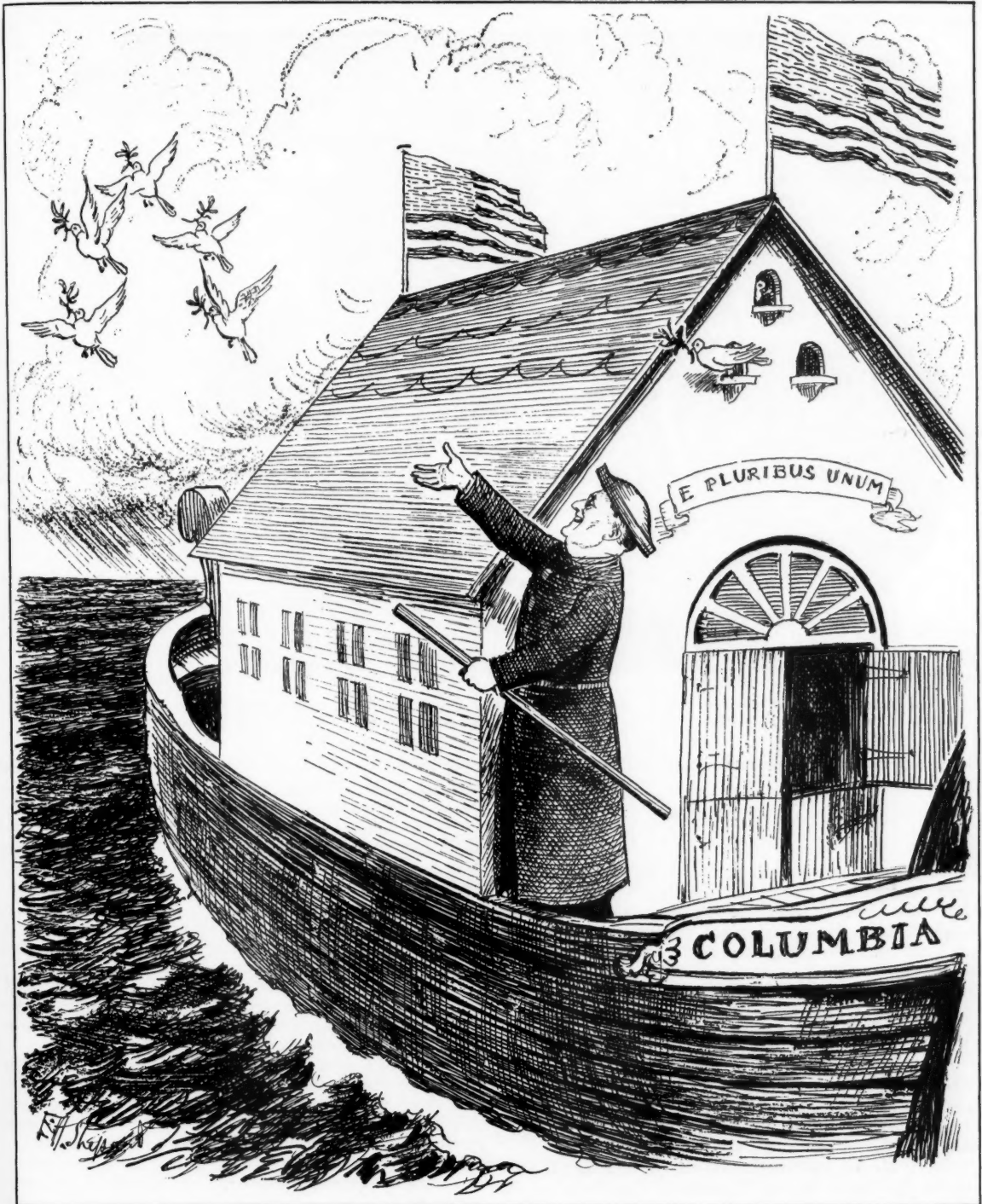


"MUMMY, WHEN I GROW UP CAN I BE AN INFANT PRODIGY TOO?"

"The B.B.C. had asked that when they made an announcement at the request of a Government department they should be allowed to say that they did it at the request of the department.

"That," he added, "seems perfectly reasonable, but we have agreed to it."—*Report of Speech by Govt. Spokesman.*

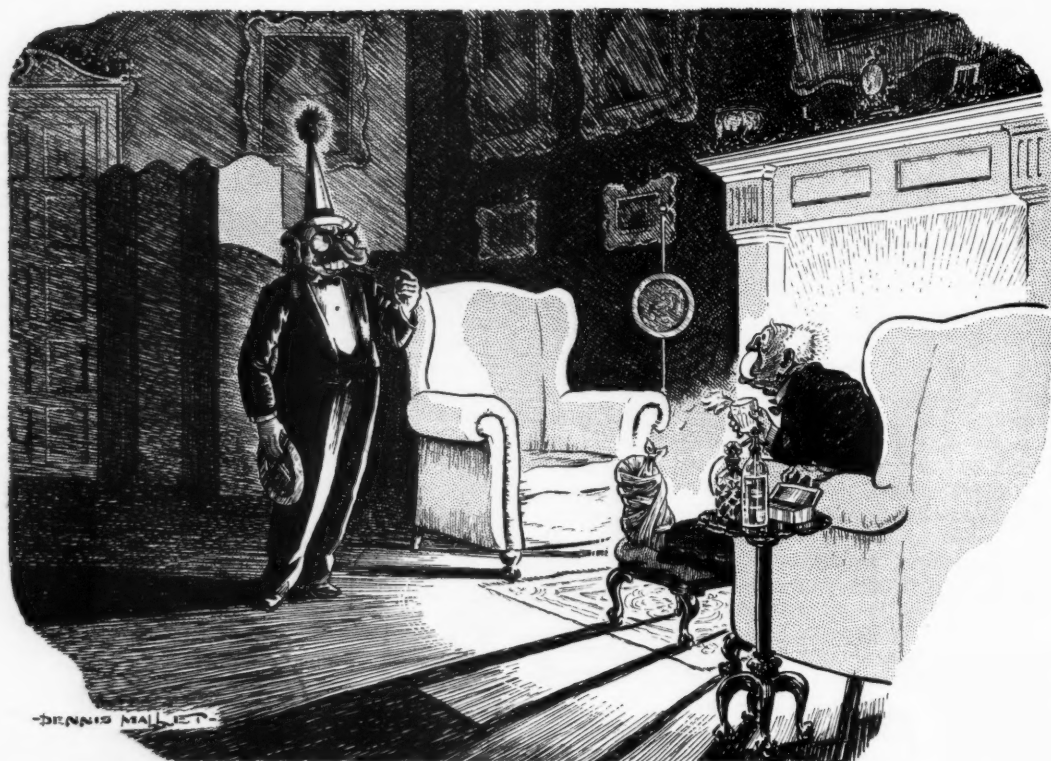
"But" is good.



A FLIGHT OF DOVES

"AND WHEN YOU GET TO EUROPE, STAY THERE!"

[Hopes are expressed that President ROOSEVELT, after the success of the Pan-American Conference, may attempt to use his great influence in the cause of European peace.]



Butler. "PARDON THE INTRUSION, MY LORD, BUT SINCE I AM EXPECTED TO LEAD THE FESTIVITIES BELOW-STAIRS, MAY I MAKE SO BOLD AS TO ASK YOUR LORDSHIP'S OPINION BEFOREHAND AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THIS HERE IS MIRTH-PROVOKING?"

The Disaccordion

Mr. Kibitzer stared hard at the conductor of the dance orchestra to which he was about to listen. Then he stared hard at some of the players. Finally he took out his cigar and said, "Hey. Haven't I given you boys an audition before? About eighteen months ago. You met with my disapproval."

"Ah," the conductor said, smiling pompously as he shifted the microphone, "but we've developed since then. Isn't that so, boys?"

"Yeah," chorussed the boys in their professional American. "Sure."

"Class is what we concentrate on now," said the conductor. "Class. Class has got a future. The boys 'n me—the boys 'n I are going all out after Class. It fetches the women."

Dubiously Mr. Kibitzer cast an expert eye over the glittering ranks. "Extra violins?" he queried.

"Three," assented the conductor. "And vocalists. We make every number a vocal now. And we have a close-harmony trio. Step up and take a bow, girls."

Three pretty young women undulated forward and smiled at Mr. Kibitzer, who waved his cigar at them affably and said "Hiyah."

A member of the band had for some moments been making signs to the conductor, who now saw him and said,

"Oh, and Lew. Lew plays the piano-accordion. Makes for richness of melody—see?"

"You don't mean melody, you mean harmony," said Mr. Kibitzer with some sternness. "Nobody knows better than I do what the piano-accordion makes for richness of. I play it myself. Harmony is what it makes for richness of."

"You said it," interjected Lew, a young Liverpoolian whose efforts to convince people that he came from Chicago were not as a rule in the least hampered by the fact that he believed that city to adorn the Pacific coast.

"Well, time we got started," said the conductor, and, grasping the microphone by the neck, he murmured into it: "Our first number is a liddle melodee entitled 'Madarm, We Have a Rendezvous with Beaudy.'"

That the Class of this composition was not exclusively literary became evident at once from the fact that it began with three violins quavering thinly against a background of bells (tremolo) struck with accuracy but no enthusiasm by Mo the drummer. Mo was muttering discontentedly to himself and occasionally, as he produced his silvery chimes, he looked absolutely disgusted. "All this class," he murmured to Len, the double-bass player, under cover of a noisy moment, "gives me a pain in the neck."

The double-bass player made no immediate reply because Bartholomew, still the band's chief singer, was embarking on the refrain—

"Mer-darm . . . we hairve . . . a ron . . . day-voov
Wee-erth byew . . . dee (pom-pom) . . .
Un . . . dernee . . . thermoo . . . ner . . . berv . . ."

When this was safely over, however, Len said darkly, "Me too."

In the last chorus Lew the new accordionist was allowed to show off his powers to considerable effect. Mr. Kibitzer could be seen listening attentively, and at the end he called out to the conductor, "There, boy. Harmony is what that makes for richness of all right."

"There he goes again, ending his sentences with split prepositions," observed a trumpet in a low voice.

In the hinterland of the orchestra an argument about grammar began as the conductor bent to the microphone: "We follow this with a number entitled——"

Lew played a chord very loud for the benefit of Mr. Kibitzer, whom he recognised as a kindred soul. "Whirroo!" he cried. "There's a juicy one. I'm a pushover for a chord like that." He played it again.

"It won't do to linger on 'em," Mr. Kibitzer said austere. Lew said, "So I'm told. But what I always say is, if it's a good one, hold it." He found another juicy one and held that.

"Our next number," the conductor persevered into the microphone, "is a liddle number entitled——"

"Nevertheless you mustn't do that," said Mr. Kibitzer loudly, addressing Lew. "You got to have an artistic conscience. Team spirit, boy. Look at these little girls here. Where'd they be without team spirit? Where'd you be, eh, girls?"

The only brunette in the trio seemed to be about to reply, but the conductor cried: "Say, you can hear them and their team spirit in this next number, which is a liddle number which has the tidle, 'Lady——'"

"Team spirit, phooey," interrupted Lew. "Team spirit means nothing to an artist. Say, PADEREWSKI or LOUIS ARMSTRONG—any virtuoso——"

Mo, in the background, gave an impressive roll on the

drum and hit a cymbal. Ern played on the piano a number of majestic chords. Such other members of the band as were not too deeply occupied in the argument about grammar also commented in their own way—all except Pete, the guitarist, who had lately become infected with the idea that, given enough practice, he would soon have enough muscular control over his head to be able to part his hair without touching it. He was practising now with a rapt expression. When the noise had subsided a little the conductor once more spoke into the microphone grimly: "OUR NEXT NUMBER IS A LIDDLE NUMBER WHICH HAS THE TIDLE, 'LADY, WHY DID YOU SIT ON MY GARDENIA?' AND IT WILL BE SUNG TO YOU——"

"Hey!" cried Mr. Kibitzer, standing up. "Girls and boys, we better postpone this audition. Seems to me team spirit is what you're all a bit too deficient in."

"Wow, get a load o' that one," said one of the sticklers for grammar.

The conductor looked round, wiped his forehead and called out to Mr. Kibitzer: "What was it you said an accordion made for richness of? *Harmony?*" R. M.

Winter Weather

I CONFESS I've been mystified somewhat of late
By a thing which intrigues me a lot;
The oldest and wisest authorities state
That hell is exceedingly hot.

I do not contend that I cannot agree
With a tenet because it is old,
But how *much* more unpleasant perdition would be
If hell were exceedingly cold!



ONE NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

TO TAKE THINGS MORE QUIETLY IN FUTURE.

More Conversations with an Employer

"TAKE this down, please. Synopsis of one-act murder play suitable for B.B.C.: *Murder Without Blood* Scene 1 a temple in Attica or better make it a pagoda in Pekin Miss Pin definitely a pagoda in Pekin fade in with something or other if I know anything of the B.B.C. the Londonderry Air are you following me Miss Pin?"

"Before you go any further, I'm afraid I ought to remind you about your lecture at Birmingham for this evening."

"What connection, Miss Pin, can possibly exist between murder without blood, in a pagoda, with a background of incidental music, and my Birmingham lecture? I must ask you to make yourself clear."

"You told me to remind you that you hadn't yet written out anything at all for your lecture."

"Miss Pin, whatever else I may be, I am, I believe, pre-eminently a *reasonable* man. Can you seriously tell me that you consider this in any way—in any way *whatsoever*—a relevant moment in which to introduce the topic, at all times a sufficiently uncongenial one, of my lecture notes?"

"You told me that I was to remind you, whatever happened, about that lecture the very first thing in the morning."

"Any such pronouncement, Miss Pin, must have been made under the influence of intoxication. If, indeed, it was ever made at all and is not a mere hallucination of your own. Provoked, possibly, by overwork. Why not take a holiday, Miss Pin? I shall undoubtedly go mad and fling myself out of a top-storey window, bereft of your help—but I must beg you most earnestly not to let that influence you for a moment. I don't know why I mentioned it. It is a consideration of not the slightest importance. *Murder Without Blood*, fade in Act 1 to—"

"No, Mr. Pancatto, I'm sorry, but you go to Birmingham this afternoon and you really must think about your lecture."

"I am the most harassed man upon

the face of this earth. People ask me to travel incredible distances, in the most inclement weather, regardless of the fact that I have a great deal more work to do at home than any human being could hope to deal with in a year, and to deliver lectures on subjects of which I know nothing whatsoever. And on no account, Miss Pin, tell me that I can choose my own subject. I can *not*. I am incapable of doing anything of the kind."

"You said something about CHARLES DICKENS."



"WELL, MUM, AT THE RISK OF MAKIN' YER FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, THIS IS THE ONE I'D 'OPED TO 'AVE FOR MESELF."

"Explain yourself further, I beg."

"I have a note here that you said there might be a possible lecture in DICKENS. And you said Dickens: his strength."

"The suggestion strikes no chord whatever. It leaves me stone-cold. What did I mean by Dickens his strength?"

"There's something else here that you said about it."

"Reveal it, Miss Pin."

"It looks like Dickens: his weakness."

"Merciful Heavens! Dickens his strength Dickens his weakness! This is the beginning of the end. The babblings of senility, no less."

"I think perhaps you meant—you *might* have meant—was DICKENS's strength his weakness? Something quite modern like that."

"The idea—if it can be called an idea—fails wholly to commend itself to me."

"Then did you—could you—have meant: Dickens: his strength *and* his weakness?"

"I am more than uninterested in what I may have meant. The whole thing sounds to me repellent in the extreme. Abandon the entire question, now and for ever."

"Really and truly we can't. Birmingham is this evening, and you said yourself that I must remind you about the lecture."

"Miss Pin, you are endowed with the most singular powers of persistence that it has ever been my lot to encounter. Fetch me *Pickwick*, *David Copperfield*, *Barnaby Rudge*, FORSTER'S *Life* and *The Tale of Two Cities*. Shelve *Murder Without Blood* sine die—or at least until next week. But before doing so make the following notes: Strangulation *not* fatal. Crumbling masonry and white ants. Tarragon."

"Will that be clear, Mr. Pancatto?"

"Why not? Or are you thinking of Dickens: his strength his weakness—which has, I admit it frankly, a certain obscurity. But it can't be helped, Miss Pin. We must do the best we can; and let me remind you that I rely upon you to bring before my notice on Monday morning—forcibly if needs be—the extreme urgency of proceeding with *Murder Without Blood*. And if I

may trespass still further upon your goodness, let me beg of you *not* to permit me to involve myself in any future undertakings which you know as well as possible I lack the time to fulfil. Life, it has been rightly said, is real, Life is earnest, And the grave is *not* its goal. And neither, Miss Pin, is the lecture-hall of Birmingham. I must ask you to leave the subject now, and give your most earnest attention to DICKENS: his strength his weakness." E. M. D.

"The soya bean will not grow anywhere."
Evening Paper Article.

Then why bother about it?

Rhyme Without Reason; or, Major Melhuish and the Corncrake

THE bosun's mate gazed out to sea
And his trainer's face was grey,
It looked all up with the referee,
For the meter stood at eleven-three
And his beard was white with spray.

"Play up, my lads of the Forty-Third,"
Came a raucous voice from the
cradle;
"Ride boldly under the enemy's guns.
Remember you're all of you white
men's sons!"
So they spanked him twice with a
ladle.

It was dark when the visiting team got
home
With a new world's record for gliding;
We gave them tea in an aerodrome
And stuffed them with hairs from a
honeycomb
And switched them into a siding.

Rock-a-bye, rock-a-bye, close your
eyes,
It's been a record gate;
The air is thick with custard-pies
And a mule drifts by in the cloudless
skies
On a single roller-skate.

Oh, who can tell what the dawn will
bring,
My horse is so ill-bred?
He chose five stones and he took his
sling,
It's a twopenny fare and the punch
goes 'Ping.'
If you hit the ground you're dead.

We woke at last from a troubled rest
By a brook where we'd often angled;
We thought that the bull-frogs might
know best,
But some were killed in the Second
Test
And the rest were privately
strangled.

It's death to sleep in a dingo's bed,
As the great CONFUCIUS teaches.
If the sun goes down in a fiery red
You must trade the halo round your
head
For a tin of ripe cling peaches.

There's a tale they tell by the cheerful
hearth
In the glittering halls of fame,
How a prince and his lady fled to Bath,
But the pumpkin burst on the bridle-
path
And the glass fell through the frame.



THE UNPOPULAR GUEST DEPARTS

Tragedy, tragedy marred the days
Of that Beach Inspector's daughter;
She wore size eight in whale-bone stays,
She was drawn round Spain by a team
of greys
And was soluble in water.

Sauce for the gander, sauce for the
goose,
With thorny scrub between.
If they won't get tight they won't get
loose.
Why try to force them? What's the use?
My favourite colour's green.

Finish it! Finish it! Write no more;
My dog's a pedigree Peke, Sir.
There's an inch of dust on the pantry
floor,
And seven pints by the kitchen-door—
You've been away a week, Sir.

To Mr. Punch.

SIR,—It is not right that an act of
international courtesy by the Admir-
alty should pass without notice.

Following the custom of remembering
distinguished men in the naming
of ships, we have had with justice for
several years H.M.S. *Laurel*. The
commissioning of the new flotilla-leader
H.M.S. *Hardy* is surely a fine tribute
to the American member of a famous
partnership. Your Servant,
FILM FAN.

"NO END TO WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH
YOUR FACE."—*Beauty Chat*.
You can even keep it shut.

Chaque à son Goût

"Wanted, married Beast and Pig-man."
Advt. in Provincial Newspaper.

The Wicked Uncle

ONCE upon a time there was a wicked uncle who lived by himself at Bilson's Family and Commercial Hotel, Bank Street, Bilbury. He was called Willie Timson and he used to wear loud check suits and go to race-meetings; and he used to pick up undesirable friends in public bars and hang about stage-doors and be rude to aldermen; and he once made vulgar noises at a Saturday Evening Concert at the Town Hall. And everyone knew that his brother, Mr. Joseph Timson, had sacked him from the mill because of something very fishy about the petty cash. So he was known throughout Bilbury as the black sheep of the Timson family.

Well, once a month the wicked uncle used to go and try to borrow some money from his little orphaned nephews. They were called Mr. Percy and Mr. Claude, and between them they ran the woollen mill which had been left to them by their father, Mr. Joseph Timson. And they were held up as models to all the young men of Bilbury. Mr. Percy was honorary secretary of the Young Conservatives' Association and both of them were members of the Philosophical and Literary Society. Mr. Claude had a magic-lantern and he used to give lectures about the places he had visited on his holidays, and Mr. Percy used to write letters to the papers, and once he had made a political speech before the municipal elections. But above all they always obeyed the last injunction of their father, which was that they should be very careful not to lend their Uncle Willie any money.

So the wicked uncle never had any luck when he called at the mill. Mr. Percy would sit at his desk and give him a lot of very sound advice about the duties of citizenship, and before he left, Mr. Claude, who was a gentle thoughtful boy, would shyly slip into his hand a few tracts on the evils of gambling or the method by which the drink habit could be cured in ten days. But all to no avail: the wicked uncle was so steeped in sin that he would even toy with the idea of catching each of the little orphans one tremendous kick in the seats of their beautifully-creased trousers, and it was only the thought of the piles of money they were making which restrained him.

But for all that he couldn't quite see how he was going to get hold of any of it for himself. And it wasn't for

want of trying either. Sometimes he would send up one of his low friends to collect their subscriptions to the Philosophical and Literary Society or the Infirmary Fund, but Mr. Percy always rang up the secretary before handing over any cash, and the low friend always had to make a bolt for it. And once he had asked them to sign his autograph-book, and Mr. Claude would have done it too if Mr. Percy hadn't found the two cheques for twenty pounds which had been slipped into the space for their names. So altogether the wicked uncle was a good example of the fact that crooked ways can avail nothing in this world against upright conduct.

Well, one evening he was leaning against the bar in the Family and Commercial after yet another fruitless visit to the mill. And he was looking so particularly dismal that a coarse gentleman of the sort that are always to be seen there came up to him and slapped him on the back saying, "Wot cheer, me old cock sparrer! It's the first sixty years that's the worst. Things'll be all the same a hundred years from now. How about a drop of what killed Auntie to drown our troubles in?"

Well, there was one thing you could say about the wicked uncle: he had never yet been known to refuse any kind of a drink offered him by any kind of a person. And it wasn't long before he and the coarse gentleman were hobnobbing as though they had known each other for years. The coarse gentleman began to tell the whole story of his life, stopping now and then to shed a manly tear into a dirty coloured handkerchief when he came to the more moving parts. And the wicked uncle explained how, but for the cruel blows of fate, he would now be a captain of industry. But the coarse gentleman said, Ah, it was the stage that had claimed him. The boards.

So then he described most feelingly the dismay of the whole theatrical world when he had announced that he was going to abandon the great tragic parts, for which some considered that he was especially fitted, in favour of another branch of the drama. He was now the comic policeman in the pantomime which had just assembled in Bilbury for rehearsals—not a large part, mark you, but one on which the whole success of the pantomime depended.

They were going to do *Cinderella*, he said, but it was going to be an up-to-date version suitable for the kiddies of the present day. There wasn't going to be any nonsense about a Prince Charming or a Fairy Queen. The main scene was to be the ball, which was to take place in a low night-club, and Cinderella has to make her get-away at twelve o'clock not because of any magic spells, but because the hero, who is an inspector of police, has given her the tip that the night-club is to be raided soon after.

"And that," said the coarse gentleman, "is where I come in as the comic policeman. Proper scream I am, I can tell you."

So then the wicked uncle, who all this time had been trying to get a word in, began to talk about his own troubles. But in particular he told the coarse gentleman all about the two little orphans who sat all day at their desks raking in money and who didn't know what to do with it when they had got it. They were teetotalers and non-smokers and they never went to race-meetings or theatres, and their only idea of an evening's dissipation was to go and listen to a lecture on the folk-lore of Iceland or the excavations in Palestine.

"Ah," said the coarse gentleman, "that's too bad. What you want to do is to brighten their ideas up for them. How about bringing them along to rehearsals to meet some of the boys? That'd give them something to think about, I can tell you."

Well, by this time they had become such friends that

Forgers



"YOU ARE GOING ON A JOURNEY."

"WHERE TO?"

"I'M SORRY—IT'S TOO DARK TO SEE."



INEFFECTUAL ATTEMPT ON THE PART OF CERTAIN HOSTILE INTERESTS TO JAM THE B.B.C.'S TELEVISION PROGRAMME.

to assert himself again. But just then there came a thunderous knocking at the door beside their chairs.

"Who's there?" called out Mr. Claude nervously.

"Cumberland," said a police-officer, appearing suddenly in the doorway.

"Cumberland?" cried Mr. Percy suspiciously—"Cumberland who?"

"Cumb along o' me!" roared the police-officer. "Who's the boss here? Come on, own up."

"I am," said Mr. Percy with dignity—"at least that was my intention in coming here."

"Well, it's the lock-up for you and likewise for your young lady friends," said the policeman.

And at that there arose a confused shouting. The stout gentleman in the background began bellowing to Mr. Percy to sit down, and Mr. Claude began calling for help, and the policeman produced an enormous pair of handcuffs which he dangled in Mr. Percy's face.

But just then there was a sound of rushing feet and the wicked uncle burst upon the scene. "My poor boys! My poor misguided nephews!" he cried. "Stand back there, you villains, or you will feel the weight of a loving uncle's fist. Claude! Percy! How could you be so led away?"

"We don't know what you mean, really we don't Uncle Willie," said Mr. Claude tearfully.

"Come, come, Claude," cried the wicked uncle sharply, "that's not the way to behave if you want my help. Ever since I heard of this mad idea of yours of starting a night-club in Bilbury I have been humbling myself before the Chief Constable, begging him to remember the honoured name of your father and of your dear old uncle. But it is no good; you will have to go to prison."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" wailed Mr. Claude. "Why ever did we come here, Percy? Is there no way out, Uncle Willie?"

"There is only one way," said the wicked uncle. "My boys, you need a father's hand to guide you. The Chief Constable told me that if he could persuade me to act as a father to you he would overlook this lapse due to the high spirits of youth."

"Oh, you will do it, won't you, Uncle Willie?" cried Mr. Claude anxiously.

"I don't know, my boy," said the wicked uncle gravely. "It's a very great responsibility. I should have to watch over you during working hours, and I should of course have to take a hand in the affairs of the mill at—ah—a suitable salary."

"Oh, of course, of course, Uncle Willie," said Mr. Claude. "Don't you agree, Percy?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Percy sadly.

So then the wicked uncle produced a pen and a piece of paper and he wrote out an agreement then and there; and it was signed by the little orphans and witnessed by the comic policeman. So the wicked uncle said that the



THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

whole company must come round to the Family and Commercial, and the drinks would be on him. And he told them they were all wrong not to have a Fairy Queen in their pantomime, because after to-night he for one would always believe in fairies.

But the two little orphans wandered out alone into the night; and for all I know the robins came and covered them with leaves.

H. W. M.

Tristful Triolet

I WAS given a ride
In an opulent car.
Yes, bursting with pride,
I was given a ride;
But no one descried
Me—not even the char.
What a waste of a ride
In an opulent car!



"AND HAVE YOU A FANCY NOSE OF THE PERIOD?"

"99"

SWEET is the low of cows;
Soft winds mid leafy boughs
Have oft been known to rouse
Poetic gush;
The lambkin's quivering bleat
Is hard, I think, to beat;
The nightingale's a treat,
So is the thrush.

But not the mooring herd,
Nor the most gifted bird,
Nor music lightly stirred
In palm or pine,
Nor aught that man can hear
Is to the doctor's ear
So moving and so dear
As 99.

From bed to bed he flits,
And by each bed he sits
Till the ill man emits
That soothing cry;
At times he e'en employs
A stethoscope, and joys
In the bronchitic noise
Derived thereby.

Some may be disinclined
To breathe those words, but find
It best to be resigned
And get it done,
Nor can mere laymen tell
Whence comes that mystic spell,
And why not just as well
Say 41.

But when by some dread blow
He is himself laid low,
Nor do his brethren know
What has gone wrong,
When many a grave M.D.
Comes round, and all agree,
Bar accidents, that he
Is not for long,

When he grows wan and pales,
And his slow breathing fails,
Then, when naught else avails,
Some brother bends
And whispers that divine
Healing of 99,
And, stirred as with strong wine,
The patient mends. DUM-DUM



"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—THEIR MAJESTIES!"





"YES, I THINK YOU ARE RIGHT, MAJOR. WE'D BETTER HUMOUR THEM."

Two New Games

THE claims of radio and Bridge are, I know, pressing, but now and then it happens, especially at this time of year, that an evening brings together a number of people who can dispense with either of those beguilements. It is for such as these that I have invented two games, both of which have been proved and found not wanting.

The first is an adaptation of the crossword-puzzle, in which, instead of the company, as ordinarily, being given the clues and finding the words, the company is given the words and required to write down each his own idea of the best clue, and then, at the end, these clues are compared with those of the puzzle-maker. This is really very amusing, the only difficulty being that of finding a puzzle which no one playing has yet seen, or has completely forgotten. No name has been given to it, but it might be called "Crossword Clues."

The other, which I have christened "Pressing the Button," is purely reminiscent. The company being assembled and, after not a little argument, radio and Bridge having been set aside, a reference book is taken from

the shelves and one of the players is asked to mention a number. He says, perhaps, fifty-nine. Somewhere on page fifty-nine of any encyclopædia there is mentioned a surname or subject, and the first of these constitutes the "button." The players then in turn relate what reminiscences, if any, that button, when pressed, releases. I say "if any," but it hardly ever fails.

As an example I may say that the other evening the word was Barnum, and out of seven players all had something to tell, although I admit that one of them confined himself to recollections of another man also called Phineas. But that is all in the spirit of the game.

Two of us had been to Barnum and Bailey's show in London in 1889-90, and they both had something to tell about it. "I wasn't so keen on the ring," one said; "I had seen so much of that before; but I was fascinated by the freaks. I believe the word freak came into our language at the time. The best of them was 'The Skeleton Dude'—a man of appalling leanness, dressed in Barnum and Bailey's notion of the latest fashion, who used to walk up and down his platform ogling the ladies among the spectators through his monocle."

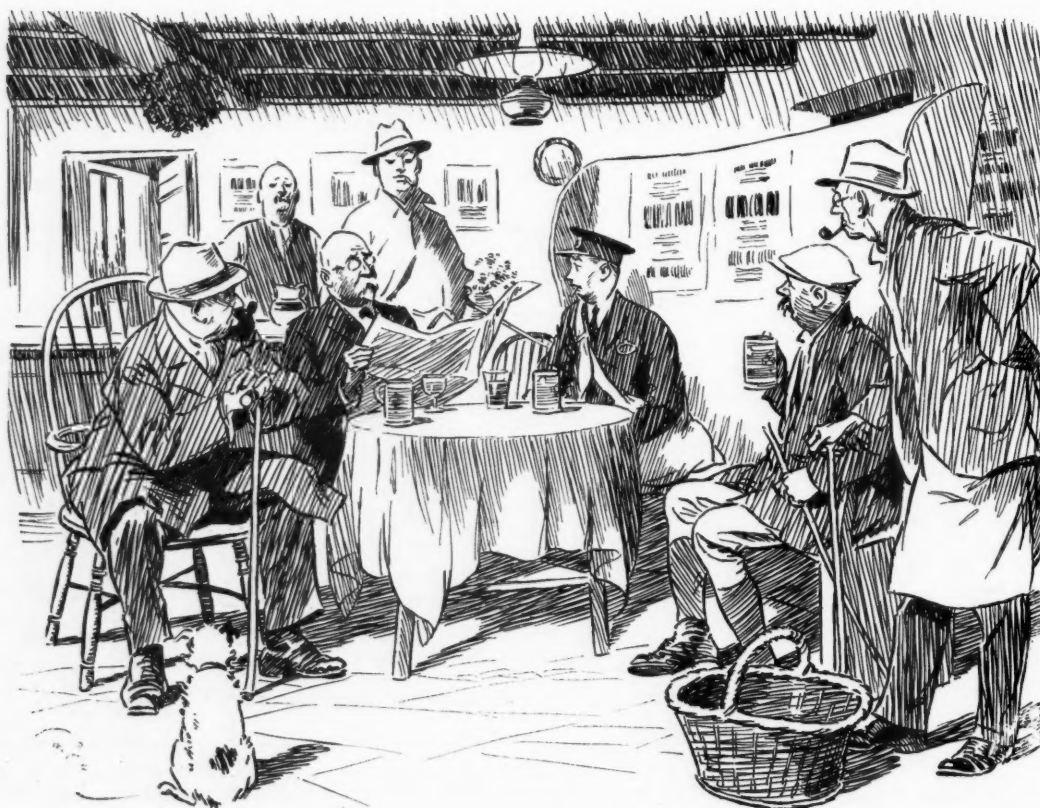
"I saw him too," said the other,

"and I was carried away by the brilliance of the idea. For a very thin man to exist, is practically nothing; but for him to be pressed into the service of this human museum; for his bare bones to be found remunerative, and for him to become probably the most popular exhibit—this was a stroke of genius. I wonder who first thought of calling him 'The Skeleton Dude'? It was as clever as 'The Twopenny Tube' and 'The Crystal Palace.'"

It was here that someone was beginning, "Ah, yes, the Crystal Palace—" but I stopped him.

"Not yet," I said; "we'll take that next, if you like, but we must all have our say about Barnum first."

And so we went on, one telling the story of how the great showman, when finding his building overcrowded by gapers, rapidly improvised the notice: "This way to the Egress," and so directed hundreds, expectantly, into the street; and another recalling the excitement and protests when Barnum bought the giant elephant Jumbo from our Zoo and added it to his allurements on the other side. We were reminded that there was a music-hall song at the time, with a sentimental tune which everybody used to hum, in which Jumbo's wife, Alice, too small



"MIND YOU, FRED, THERE MAY BE SOMETH'N US DON'T KNOW NOTH'N AT ALL ABOUT."

to attract Barnum's acquisitive eye, expressed her opinion:—

*"Jumbo said to Alice: 'I love you.'
Alice said to Jumbo: 'I don't believe it's true.'*

If you really loved me as you say you do,

You wouldn't go to Yankee-land and leave me in the Zoo.'"

Another player quoted as BARNUM's the saying, "You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all the people all of the time"; but the majority believed this to be LINCOLN'S; and finally someone told us that in the current number of *The Sawdust Ring* an advertiser offers "Scriptural quotation anent passes, autographed by Barnum," unpriced, and "Eighteen Barnum signatures from cheques, at six shillings each." So BARNUM, you see, was a lucky choice. But in "Pressing the Button" it does not much matter what the theme is: something results.

E. V. L.

Mr. Silvertop and the Underdones' Chests

I FOUND the little man in his workshop, soberly operating a chisel but inclined to talk. The news, splashed over the morning papers, that some Siamese twins from Schenectady were about to attempt to fly all at once higher, faster and further than any singleton had ever done put an ironic curl into his upper lip.

"I may be only an old perisher," he said in a voice charged with the conviction that this was not so, "but it seems to me the greatest danger in the world to-day's this 'ere ruddy competitive spirit. Blokes with loud voices 'oo can't see beyond the ends of their own pug-noses is always cracking it up as the thing what makes men be'ave like men—when what the pore mugs can't grasp is it only makes 'em be'ave like infants-in-arms.

"These last few months I've seen

the 'ole silly business in a nutshell, as you might say. I've done odd work for a good many years in a gent's 'ouse up Frogna' way—Colonel Underdone's 'is name, and 'e was a bachelor and a quiet enough old cove until last June 'is twin brother, the Major, 'oo'd been messin' about all 'is life in one of them God-forsaken 'oles out East, comes 'ome on a pension and the two of 'em settles down together. They was very good friends, both 'aving the same sort of old-maidish on-the-minute 'abits, and they 'ad plenty to talk about, not 'aving seen much of each other for so long. So for the first week all goes ever so 'appily.

"Then one night as they was a-sitting over their port the Major 'e ses, 'You know, Charles,' 'e ses, 'it's a pity for you to let yourself go like this.' 'What the 'ell do you mean?' asks the Colonel. 'Well,' ses the Major, 'I may be a bit unnecessarily 'ot on keeping fit, but I 'ates to see you not bothering about your tummy getting bigger and your chest not 'eld out as it used to be.'

"The Colonel 'e spluttered a bit, so 'Ogg, their man, tells me, and then 'e ses, 'Nonsense! I'm just as I always was. But it's funny you saying that, for I was just a-going to say the same about you!' Well, then it was the Major's turn to splutter and swear 'e 'adn't changed 'arf-an-inch in twenty years. 'Look 'ere,' ses the Colonel, 'we'll get 'Ogg to settle this once and for all with 'is measuring-tape. When we was at Sand'urst we was the same to an 'air's-breadth.'

"The two of 'em takes off their coats there and then, and while 'Ogg's checking up they goes on spluttering. 'Ridiculous!' ses the Major. 'Anyone with 'arf an eye can see you're a good three inches fatter round the middle than me'—and 'Pooh!' ses the Colonel, 'if I 'aven't two inches on you round the chest I'll eat my sword.'

" 'Well, 'Ogg?' they both asks, a bit anxious-like, when 'e's finished.

" 'Exactly the same,' ses 'Ogg, 'whichever way you look at it.'

"In the morning the Colonel sends for me and ses 'e 'asn't been feeling up to much and 'e wants me to fit one of them big spring chest-expanders on to 'is bathroom wall. Going out I runs across the Major, and 'e says almost the same words. Both of 'em 'ad their chests so stuck out their coats wouldn't button, and there was a narsty competitive glint in their eyes what made me very app'rensive.

"Next day, when I goes to fix up the expanders, I finds in each bathroom one of them great rowing-machines, brand-new. And when I goes to 'ave a noggin' with the cook at eleven she tells me neither of 'em's 'ad no breakfast, and all they've ordered for lunch is a bite of salad. Talk about infants-in-arms! A few nights later the Colonel ses, lightly-like, 'I've just got 'Ogg to measure me again, 'Erbert, and 'e finds I'm down two inches round the tummy and up one on the chest.' 'Is that so?' asks the Major. 'When 'e did me last night 'e found that was what I'd changed, too.' Pore 'Ogg ses they didn't speak another word to each other that night, but kept on glaring at 'im as if it was all the fault of 'im and 'is measuring-tape.

"Well, from being such good friends, 'competitive' 'ardly describes 'ow them two got. And the lengths they went to, you wouldn't believe—skipping and tumbling and tying 'em-selves up in them perishing exercises and living on the smell of a sandwich. Every few days 'Ogg measures 'em, always with the same results, and back they goes to their bathrooms to fair near burst 'em-selves. That went on for five weeks."



Voice from above. "IT WILL REQUIRE SOMETHING BETTER THAN YOUR IMITATION OF A COW TO CONVINCE ME THAT YOU SPENT THE EVENING AT A MILK BAR."

"But they might have hurt themselves badly?" I interrupted.

"Fortunately that was exactly what they did do," Mr. Silvertop replied. "As it 'appened it was the wall what ran between their bathrooms what saved their lives—the wall what the expanders was screwed to. One evening after 'Ogg 'ad 'anded out the usual figures, they both went at their expanders again like loonies, and the poor ole wall wasn't reely up to it. All of a sudden it just packed up. The Colonel 'e went out of 'is window backwards and fetched up on the gravel,

and the Major 'e did the same, only by the time 'e'd come to earth the summer-'ouse needed a new roof.

"When they left the nursing-'ome three weeks later they made 'Ogg burn 'is measuring-tape and then went and 'ad an 'ell of a meal together up West. 'So they're what you might call cured of the competitive spirit. But corlomme! it's an ugly thing."

ERIC.

"WHAT TO DO WITH TONGUES,"
Domestic Page.

"Stop them wagging," Gran'pa says.

At the Play

"WHAT'S BECOME OF THE FAIRIES?"
(PICCADILLY)

THE real answer to this question is that the self-appointed publicity-agents of the elfin world over-reached themselves so badly ten, twenty and thirty years ago that a kind of gnomic disarmament has been taking place ever since; but the particular answer in this case was that all the little Tinkerbells had fallen victims to *Radio*, the King of the Spiders, a monarch with a chronic anti-pixie complex, and been imprisoned in a capacious underground flat which he rented in the Forest of Gnarled Oaks. This tyrant had earned his title, one gathered, on account of the woolly aerials which sprouted from his plump brown back and not because of his peculiar interest in the Fay Stock Prices; the only agent with the faintest chance of short-circuiting his dominion was a mortal child.

Two of these, nice children both, open the play at their bedroom-window with the old, old argument about the existence of the little people, at which profitless exercise they are interrupted by *Santa Claus* himself, who whisks them off in his sleigh in order that *John*, the unbeliever, shall have his doubts dispelled and purge his discreditable suspicions by turning *Radio* permanently off. This eventually he does, with an outsize in hat-pins as a weapon, releasing not only all the lesser sprites but, much more spectacular, the *Princess Celia*, their liege-lady. Her heart has been most uncomfortably petrified by a double-edged *apéritif* from *Radio's* bar and, when we come upon her, she is making small attempt to counter the depression consequent on discovering that, with a fair-sized brick beating in her bosom, her feelings towards *Prince Charming* are as

chilly as the snow which has fallen earlier in the play.

In the last scene *Santa Claus* is most hospitably at home in his City of Toys,

and before the wedding of *Celia* and *Charming*, at which he officiates on the lines of a very revised service, we have the satisfaction of seeing a simple operation performed on *Celia* which appears to restore her affections in full.

Four-fifths of the large cast are small girls, and the strong point of the production is their dancing, for which Miss GRACE CONE has been responsible. The principals put up an excellent show and the chorus is gay and attractive.

Miss GLADYS CORLETT has contributed a number of pleasing tunes. Some of the dresses are good, and so is the final set, but too much of the time is spent amongst rather gloomy surroundings. These are relieved by little humour, and this is where the weakness of Mr. EDWARD GENN's play lies. Children still love magic groves and all the rest of it, but on the understanding

that the bargain will also include plenty of loud knock-about in which palpably absurd persons sustain the maximum amount of hurt. Mr. GENN's revels are conducted with too uniform a dignity.

The grateful and deserving recipient of the profits will be the Charing Cross Hospital. ERIC.

"On return from their three-quarter length goat, and hat and honeymoon they will take up their residence in London."

Channel Islands Paper.

Life will be less varied here, we fear.

An Impending Apology

"Mr. Wm. Bannatyne, F.F.A., F.C.I.I., the president, was in the chair and seating accommodation was overtaxed."—*Business Journal.*

1066 and All That

"Mr. — equally claimed descent from a 17th century pioneer, who also is reputed to have been present at the Battle of Hastings."

Channel Islands Paper.

"(Solution on this page next page.)"—*Radio Paper.*

Puzzle: Find the solution.



CHILD'S PLAY

Joan	MISS ANGELA BRAEMAR
Cicero (a Toad)	MR. JOHN RORKE
John	MISS MARY ALLEN
Radio (the Spider King)	MR. GEORGE HAGAN



THE BLUES IN THE AZURE MOUNTAINS

Princess Celia	MISS HILDA ALLEN
Prince Charming	MISS JOYCE WINN

LONG DISTANCE



"IS THAT YOU, DEAR? I RANG YOU UP BECAUSE I WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING IN A GREAT HURRY..."



CAN YOU HEAR ME, DEAR?—YES, I CAN HEAR QUITE WELL. . .



BETTER THAN LAST TIME, I THINK—I SAID BETTER THAN LAST TIME. . .



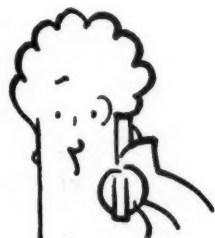
I SAID I CAN HEAR YOU BETTER . . .



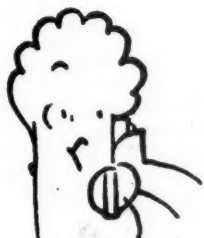
YES, I CAN HEAR QUITE DISTINCTLY—PERHAPS IT'S SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE WEATHER. . .



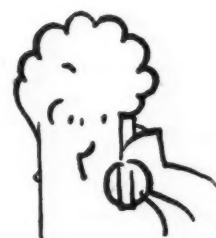
YES, THE WEATHER. OH, NO, IT'S BEEN LOVELY HERE TO-DAY . . .



HAS IT? WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY RAIN HERE. . .



NO, TO-DAY WAS LOVELY—SPECIALLY THIS MORNING. . .



I SAID, 'SPECIALLY THIS MORNING'—THE SUN WAS SHINING—THE SUN—YES—SHINING. . .



WHAT, DEAR? OH, THERE GO THE PIPS—I SIMPLY MUST RING OFF. . .



I COULDN'T POSSIBLY AFFORD ANOTHER THREE MINUTES. . .



NO. GOOD-NIGHT, DEAR—GOOD-NIGHT."

More Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club

From Mrs. Wobblegoose, Stewardess Roughover Golf Club.

Monday, 14th December.

MR. WHELK, DEAR SIR,—The husband saw a ghost when he was locking up the Club last night and he fainted right out, and I and Jeannie had a terrible time getting him round; and Sir, poor Ephraim is still real bad and is now in bed with the shock and like to remain for a while.

He keeps on telling us that it was a terrible-looking thing, and he is that shook up he now thinks it is under his bed and won't put his feet to the floor, even though I coax him with a nice grilled chop.

Yours faithfully,
LOTTIE WOBLEGOOSE.

From Lionel Nutmeg, Malayan Civil Service (Retired), Old Bucks Cottage, Roughover.

15/12/36.

DEAR SIR,—I hear that Wobblegoose saw the ghost last night, and this is to inform you that I have known that the Club was haunted for some time as I have repeatedly seen a spectre just before lunch in the locker-rooms. It has a long gaunt face and twisted body, and hisses through its teeth when it moves about.

Ralph Viney, in trying to be facetious this morning, told me he had seen it drinking the ink in the writing-room. He is a fool.

Yours faithfully,
L. NUTMEG.

From General Sir Armstrong Forcursue, K.B.E., C.S.I., The Cedars, Roughover.

17/12/36.

DEAR WHELK,—Nutmeg is talking through his neck about the ghost. The fellow is obsessed with all this Hindoo Yoga business, and I think I may tell you now (although he swore me to secrecy at the time) that I once caught him sitting cross-legged on the floor of his study staring hard at a bowl of forget-me-nots and trying to get into some sort of trance.

It is patently obvious that a man who can do that sort of thing would see anything.

All the same I believe the place is haunted as I have recently noticed a smell of brimstone in all the rooms which I frequent.

Yours sincerely,
ARMSTRONG FORCURSUE.

From Miss Jean Knippey, Waitress at Roughover Golf Club.

DEAR SIR,—This is to say I am to again give notice, this time it being the ghost tripping me up and spilling the beef-steak and kidney pudding I was carrying over Commander Harrington Nettle and me only saying 'Lawks!' and him getting to his feet real nasty and saying I was no lady.

I was also stung on the heel last night, and there is now a red mark there that looks like the shape of a skull. This I am quite certain is the ghost's doing, and I am in a rare sweat about it all.

Your obedient servant,
J. KNIPPEY.

From Admiral Charles Sneyring-Stymie, C.B., The Bents, Roughover.

Saturday.

DEAR SIR,—Why have you not laid the ghost yet? It is your job as secretary. To be quite frank, the thing has been giving me hell ever since Wobblegoose disturbed it on Monday, as it keeps on following me round the course and making me stab all my putts, so that I am now playing off 24 instead of 22. Not only that, but yesterday, just as I was about to drive at the 15th, my ball was quite definitely pushed off my peg-tee by an unseen hand.

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES SNEYRING-STYMIE.

P.S.—The ghost might possibly be that of the man who was secretary to the Club in 1893. He was found murdered in the cellar.

P.S. 2.—Has it ever struck you that history has a habit of repeating itself?

From Frank Plantain, Greenkeeper Roughover Golf Club.

Saturday.

DEAR SIR,—Two of the new spades that was bought the other day is missing, the groundsmen knowing nothing when questioned. This must be that there ghost.

A visitor complained to me on Wednesday that the ghost had stolen his ball at the 4th, but this is not correct as I found it myself as soon as his back was turned.

Yours, Sir,
F. PLANTAIN.

From Rupert Bindweed, Fig-Tree Villa, Roughover.

21/12/36.

DEAR SIR,—I wish to resign from the Club because of the ghost. I was

dozing in the Reading Room this afternoon and I heard it whisper, 'If the 3.30 wins I'll give the members a dam good fright.'

The only other person in the room was that nice civil page (Pullcork), who was tidying up the papers at the time, and when I questioned him he said he was almost sure he had heard it too.

Yours faithfully,
R. BINDWEED.

From Marcus Penworthy, Free-lance Journalist, Roughover. (By hand.)

22/12/36.

DEAR WHELK,—I am just back after being away since last Friday and have only this minute heard about the ghost.

For Heaven's sake let me have the sole copyright; it might be the making of me. I shall be along this evening to get full details.

I suppose you couldn't get W. to draw a picture of what it looked like? People are always sceptical about these things unless they are supported by some little extra like that.

My story about General Forcursue damaging his tongue while opening the bottle of beer with his teeth was turned down this morning by *The Ironmongers Workers Gazette* with the usual rejection note. Life is sometimes very hard.

Yours sincerely,
M. PENWORTHY.

From Mrs. Whelk (his mother), 103, Southward Street, London, S.W.1.

22nd December, 1936.

MY DARLING BOY,—The story of the Roughover Ghost is in all the evening papers. Dearest child, do be careful. It seems perfectly ghastly.

Poor Mrs. Shruggings has just rung up to say she has also seen the news and to tell you that she once saw a ghost in Tasmania and next day she had developed mumps.

What size do you take in shirts (neck and chest measurements)?

Your loving
MOTHER.

From John Baggs, Caddiemaster Roughover Golf Club.

Tuesday, 22nd December.

MR. WHELK, DEAR SIR,—Well, Sir, this is to state that I sat up last night in the hall as you bid me for to see if I could catch the ghost, and, Sir, it was terrible awful, and me able to hear my heart beating a mile away. And then, Sir, about one A.M. I felt I couldn't stand it no longer, what with the shivers running up and down



"YES, SIR, THAT'S MRS. JONES'S, SIR. MRS. GREEN'S AT HER BACK AND HER FRONT'S ROUND AT THE SIDE."

my back and me getting hot and cold turns in my legs; so I out with the pipe, but no sooner had I struck a match than I saw two great eyes glaring at me as if they was coming out of the wall. So, Sir, I gave a right good yell and let fly with the niblick you said I was to use; and what a shemozzle there was, for when I come to there I was lying beneath the stuffed head of that there American bison that was killed by Colonel Haggworry in 1901, it having been badly put back after the last spring clean.

Well, Sir, I am sorry for what I done, but I think the ghost must have been there off and on, for there was

times my hair stood up on end something powerful, and my spectacles is nowhere to be found.

Yours, Sir,

J. BAGGS,
Caddiemaster.

P.S.—The specks has come to light since writing the above, Mr. Nutmeg finding them in the animal's beard, for which I am thankful.

From Dr. Edwin Sockett, Roughover.
December 23rd, 1936.

DEAR PAT, — Mrs. Wobblegoose called me in this morning to have a look at her husband, and you can take

it from me that there is no ghost in the Club, nor has there ever been one.

Putting it bluntly, the old chap is suffering from an acute attack of D.T.'s, but I'm glad to say it is now slackening off into the "red-hot rat" stage.

Just before I left he told me that the ghost he'd seen on Monday was an embodiment of Admiral Sneyring-Stymie, Lionel Nutmeg, Commander Harrington Nettle and General Forcursue all rolled into one, and that it had eight hands, spoke Chinese swear-words, and had ferrets looking out of the pockets of its coat, with eyes like golf-balls.



Colonel (who has been upset). "WHAT THE DEVIL D'YE MEAN BY IT, SIR? I DON'T KNOW YOU, DO I?"

I know you won't take any drastic action over this, and would suggest you keep the matter to yourself, as I hope to have him fairly well all right quite soon. He's too lovable an old fellow to lose just because of a tiny indiscretion like that.

Yours ever, E. S.
G. C. N.

Sleep Sold Here.

(A new idea from America is the "Sleep Shop," which sells slumber accessories, ranging from pyjamas to sedatives—and even blinkers.)

You, Sir, overwrought and hot,
Threshing like an octopus,
Sleep eludes you, does it not?
Bring your ravelled sleeves to us!
"Opiate wands" and amulets—
Throw them all away;
Try our super slumber-sets
(Eighteen months to pay).
Sleep, the foster-child of Death,
Sleep as murdered by *Macbeth*,
Sleep as calm as seraph's breath—
That's what we purvey.

BYRON used to toss and curse,
Thinking, drinking overmuch,
All bedwarmers made him worse
(Hot and horrid to the touch!);
WORDSWORTH moaned his sleepless state
(Too much cerebration);
SHELLEY's was the selfsame fate
(Lack of recreation).
Odes to Sleep swarm thick as bees
In the world's anthologies;
Bygone bards of all degrees
Suffered "night starvation."

Modern bards serenely snore,
Seldom do they bay the moon;
They have found our "Slumber Store";

You yourself may share this boon.

Does your wife sit up at night
Reading *PIRANDELLO*
With the bed-lamp burning bright?

Grieve no more, dear fellow!
Do not wish you'd never wed,
Put these blinkers on instead;
Through your tortured frame will spread
Sleep benign and mellow.

Lo, along our Aisles of Rest
Cases, boxes, bottles, tubs
Laden with the very best
Soporific syllabubs;
Poppied possets which dispel
Any griefs that cumber,
Potions with a lazy smell,
And, in endless number,
Soothing silks and fairest lawns,
Curtains which defeat the dawns....
Read *BRAM STOKER*, dine on
prawns,
Still we bring you slumber!

Immovable Feast

"I CANNOT help feeling," I said,
"that we ought to make a change this Christmas."

Rachel nodded. "We might give Uncle Percy a pipe instead of a tie," she said thoughtfully.

"I mean more of a change than that," I replied. "You know, go somewhere different or—or stay here or something."

Rachel looked up sharply. "You—you mean *not* go to Aunt Emily's?" she asked in awed tones.

"Exactly," I said firmly. "It may sound rather blasphemous, but I'm tired of spending Christmas at Aunt Emily's. I have done so, man and boy, ever since I can remember. You have done so ever since you married me. The children have done so ever since they can remember. Darn it all, I don't want the children to grow up thinking that Christmas consists of one long gorge in that depressing house and pretending you don't recognise poor old Percy in his Santa Claus get-up."

"They might be hurt if we didn't go," said Rachel feebly.

"Nonsense! I'll bet Aunt Emily dreads the whole thing. That's the trouble. They ask us because they think we shall be hurt if they don't, and we go because we think they'll be hurt if we don't."

"Of course Christmas always is a bit difficult," said Rachel pensively. "It made my heart bleed to see Prudence romping with Uncle Percy last year. Poor lamb, she was so good, and she *doesn't* like it."

"Of course she doesn't," I said; "nor does he. Nobody has yet invented a really enjoyable sort of romp for two people with an age difference of about seventy-one years. It's agin nature."

There was a long silence.

"Then you take mistletoe," said Rachel suddenly. "Do you realise that I have never in my life been kissed under the mistletoe by anybody who wouldn't have kissed me anyway, whether there was mistletoe or not?"

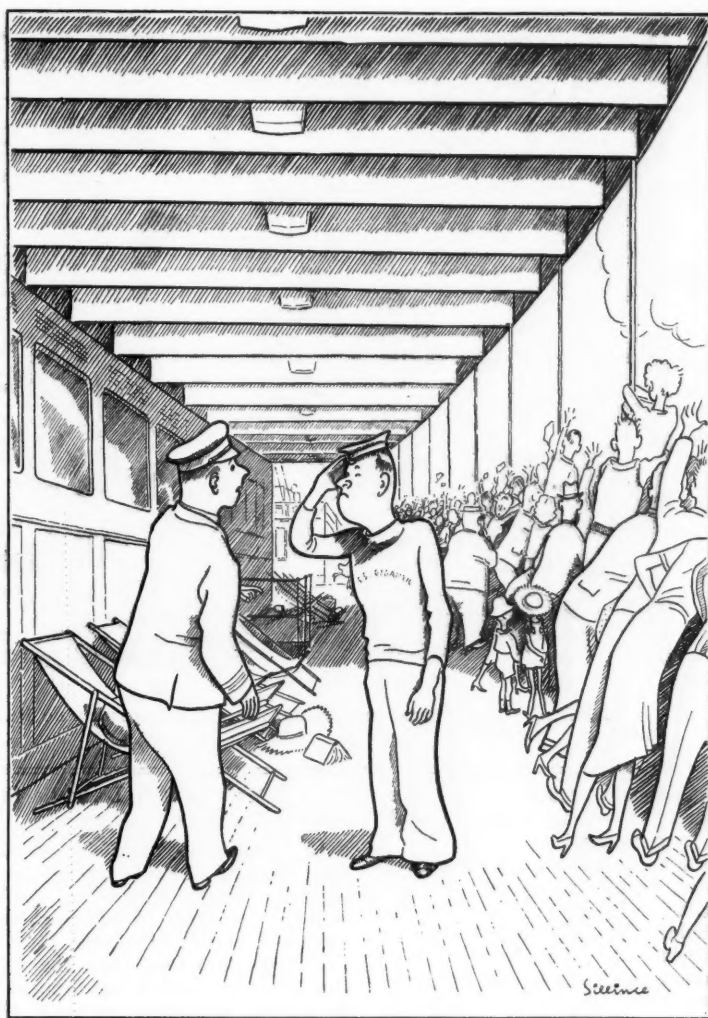
"Nor have I," I said firmly, "but I'm going to be this year."

Since the above decision took place, we have been into the matter, and at the moment I confess that Rachel's feeling that Christmas is difficult seems to be justified. We have considered—

(1) *Going to an Hotel.* We both have a feeling that this would be Far Too Jolly. After all, the poor blighters who go to hotels at Christmas are obviously people who haven't got homes or relatives or anything. The thought of playing round games with a crowd of perfect strangers, or singing "Auld Lang Syne" with a lot of people we don't know and don't want to, is rather grim.

(2) *Going to Switzerland, or Something Like That.* Objection: If we go to Switzerland for Christmas we cannot go for the rest of the year. It seems silly to waste Christmas on Switzerland or Switzerland on Christmas. Anyhow, we can't afford it.

(3) *Going on a Cruise.* See HOTEL



THE MISOGYNIST

"FEMALE OVERBOARD, SIR!"

above. Only you can't even come away from a cruise.

(4) *Staying at Home.* There are a variety of snags here. Our home is generally admitted to be one of the most up-to-date flats in what the agents call a "favoured locality." But somehow we just can't see it as a Christmas venue. Because—

(a) It is one of those square compact places. Admirable for everyday living, but for Christmas purposes a little lacking in romance. One could not, for example, play hide-and-seek. There isn't anywhere to hide. You're either in a room or not. Aunt Emily's house of course was designed

for Christmas hide-and-seek. For the other three-hundred-and-sixty-four days of the year it is just a thoroughly inconvenient, rambling old show.

(b) The central heating is excellent, but it definitely does *not* cast a ruddy glow. Nor can one pile logs on it. And although I don't want the children to grow up feeling that Santa Claus is a silly game played for the benefit of Uncle Percy, neither do I want to have to tell them that Santa Claus comes down a hot-water pipe.

(c) The place does *not* lend itself to appropriate decoration. Rachel and I are agreed that VAN GOGH'S "Cornfield" would look silly with



"I AM THE FAIRY QUEEN, AND WHERE THE BEE SUCKS THERE DO I LIVE ON HONEY-DEW. YES, CLEAR THE SUPPER-TRAY, CHARLEY."

a paper-chain round it, and there isn't a darned place where you could really put holly.

(d) I don't see what we should do about waits. I suppose one gets waits even in London, but we shouldn't be able to hear them from the sixth floor for the buses, and I don't think the porter would let them come up and bawl through the keyhole. Besides, one could not throw coppers out of our windows without endangering life.

(e) Staying at Home does not solve the mistletoe difficulty mentioned above. Of course we could Have People In, but the sort of people we can think of to Have In don't go with Christmas at all. They are all about our own age and we see quite enough of them during the year without having to have them about on Christmas Day. They would be sure to want to dance and drink and so on. The whole thing would just turn into an ordinary rather awful party, and before we knew where we were young George Pidgeon would be half-tight and would be wanting to kiss Rachel, or something. We both think that it would be a bad thing to give the children the idea that Christmas meant That Sort of Thing.

(f) Anyhow, the Domestic Staff will want Christmas Day off.

Of course what we really want is clear enough. There's only one place to spend Christmas, and that's in the country, where all the old-fashioned stuff is a matter of course; in a big rambling old house, with the waits coming round and being brought in for a drink, and a big open hearth that will take a *real* log, and the sort of chimney that doesn't strain a child's credulity. One wants that, and one wants the *people* right. It's no use with strangers or even just with casual friends. They want to be people you've known for years and years and perhaps haven't seen for a bit. Not people you've known six months and seen far too often.

Actually Rachel and I are agreed that this year we will go to Aunt Emily and Uncle Percy again, in case they should be hurt; so the problem does not arise for the moment. But sooner or later it will have to be faced. You see, Aunt Emily is seventy-six. Unfortunately.

"DANGEROUS CRAB IN THAMES."
Daily Paper Headline.

Arrangements are being made to have it caught by the Dark Blues next March.

From the Agony Column

["CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.—Do we realise that we take away food provided for birds when we rob berries from trees in winter?"]

We feed the tits with suet;
We throw the robins crumbs;
We have been taught to do it
Whenever winter comes.
We give the greenfinch millet;
We give the barn-owl meat;
A rook flies down—we fill it
As full as it can eat.

Bird-baths on marble bases
We fashion and keep filled;
We guard birds' nesting-places
Which we have helped to build;
Birds steal our white-heart cherries;
Birds breakfast off our peas;
May we not pluck their berries
At Christmas from their trees?

If any bird alleges
That we have not the right
To ransack wintry hedges
To make our fireside bright,
We'll put scraps in the dust-bin,
Pour bread-crumbs down the drain,
And tell the thrush who's just been
He need not come again.

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

How We Got Here

IN expanding the last chapter of his *Early Victorian England* into *Victorian England, Portrait of an Age* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 7/6), Mr. G. M. YOUNG has produced a magnificent piece of characterisation and a looking-glass for the embarrassed present. The Victorian Age he sees as a second Renaissance, essentially secular and humanist. Like the Rochdale pioneers who were out to ensure "the moral and intellectual advancement" of their members by means of "groceries, butcher's meat, drapery goods, clothes and clogs," it blended a minimum of the supernatural with a maximum of philanthropy. Economically an age of production ushered in that of finance, in the "titanic chaos" of which—and its accompanying Imperialism—we are still involved. Of the stabilities that rendered the period's swift transitions so unrevolutionary, the Victorian family comes first; the historian, however, resigns himself to its decay and congratulates modern woman on her freedom from attractiveness, accomplishments and children. The Graces, the Muses, and a baby in your arms—I should hardly have called them "burdens" myself. But such they would have seemed (one imagines) to JEREMY BENTHAM, of whom Mr. YOUNG is so witty, so earnest and (so far as they both go) so sound a disciple.

Stormy Petrel

Looking for trouble might describe the attitude to life confessed by implication in Mrs. CLARE SHERIDAN'S latest section of autobiography, *Arab Interlude* (NICHOLSON AND WATSON, 15/-). For the sake of an adored son and a daughter who seems to have been, by her mother's account, expert at making tart remarks, she decided to settle somewhere, and so spent eight years in the Sahara, building a house at Biskra, in itself a sufficiently troublesome undertaking. She made many journeys, once to London simply to model GANDHI, many into the desert; and altogether, allowing for the rigid conventions of her Arab friends and particularly for their frank and brutal marriage customs, one gathers that the interlude was sufficiently eventful. Into the last nine pages she packs an account of the winter of 1933-34 in Paris and her own joyous activities with the *Camelots du Roi*. Mrs. SHERIDAN gives the impression that generally she sees detail well though she fails to take a long or wide view; but her book is full of animation and interesting personalities European and African, and will not fail to please many readers.



"AVE WE YOUR PERMISSION, SIR, TO DECORATE THE MAST-HEAD WITH THIS? WE'VE FINISHED WITH IT ASHORE AS MISTLETOE."

From a Downland Garden

Those now faded green volumes of Mrs. EARLE'S *Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden* have a lot to answer for. They are still the best of the half-practical, half-fanciful books inspired by horticulture—with countryside and (occasionally) kitchen thrown in; but their modern descendants are neither so thorough nor so unaffected. Mrs. ETHEL ARMITAGE follows Mrs. EARLE in assigning to each month of the year the meditations prompted by *A Country Garden* (COUNTRY LIFE, 10/6) on the South Downs, with thrilling but slight allusions to exploits on Gibraltar added for good measure. She is creditably enterprising with seeds, her triumphs ranging from *Chimonanthus fragrans* to a banana. But I fear that fruit-growers will find her choice of apples for their "encouraging" names a trifle flimsy. Thanks largely to East Malling most of us take our planting more expertly, and our filberts—hers usually get dry and shrivelled—are kept

plump and crisp in silver-sand. Mr. JOHN FARLEIGH'S engravings of flowers, from Crown Imperial to Magnolia, exhibit a delightful strength and accuracy. His trees and landscapes strike me as made up—and very perversely made up—out of his head.

Battle Pieces

No piece of writing with the magic signature of JOHN BUCHAN can fail to be at least sometimes inspiring, yet one must confess that his *Episodes of the Great War* (NELSON, 8/6) is, as a whole, less satisfying than *Greenmantle*, say, or, emphatically, *Montrose*. This is not because of any lurking feeling that *Richard Hannay* or the great Marquis would have made more dashing commanders-in-chief than HAIG or JOFFRE, but simply because this volume is only an abridged version of an impressive original. The writer's longer history has had pieces jagged out of it, and the raw edges are not perfectly healed even by a title which suggests an after-thought rather than a primary intention. The more striking passages of the full history remain, however, so that we read once more in noble English prose of the miracle of the Marne, First Ypres or Coronel. FOCH is still set on the pedestal not always accorded to him; WILSON refuses to be duped by the tardy repentance of a fallen enemy. Above all there is no doubt as to the rightness of the Allied cause or the greatness of the victory.

The Ring and the Book

Although the life of the circus has in recent years attracted liberal attention from historians and novelists alike, *Circus Parade* (BATSFORD, 7/6), both for its letterpress and beautiful illustrations, is sure to be warmly welcomed. After tracing the development of this form of entertainment from its origin to the present day, Mr. JOHN S. CLARKE, in some remarkable chapters, discusses wild animals and their trainers. Here his personal experiences as a trainer give additional importance to his opinions, and those who are opposed to the training and taming of lions and other animals ought in fairness to study his views on a vexed question. I also enjoyed especially the chapter "Clowns and Clowning." But Mr. CLARKE is familiar with all branches of the circus and with those who in various ways are distinguished for their incredibly daring and clever performances. A well-written and finely-produced volume.

"Seymour"

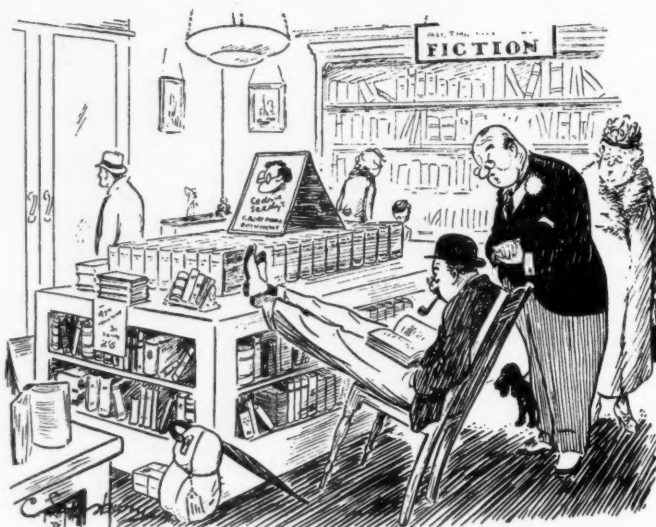
Laugh With Me, by SEYMOUR HICKS (CASSELL, 3/6), is an anthology of lively stories which its author engagingly hopes "may help to while away an idle hour." The title

takes some living up to, but is justified. Not to start pulling raisins out of the cake, but to sharpen the appetite of intending purchasers, one may disinter the incident of the distinguished practitioner (name not given) who, after two months' treatment of a patient for jaundice, discovered that he was a Chinaman. But the most startling feature of the book appears on the back of the jacket, where "SEYMOUR" to his countless friends, "HICKS" to the gallery, is suddenly and unexpectedly christened "Sir EDWARD." This will never do. He can get away with most things, but, if he thinks he is going to put that across, he is mistaken. Sir EDWARD, quotha! Perhaps that is why he has gone off to South Africa.

Flights of Fancy

Mr. ALAN GRIFFITHS may have allowed himself more scope in *The Passionate Astrologer* (BARKER, 7/6) than is acceptable

to everyone, for the scenes of his story range between heaven (generally called the empyrean) and earth. But if the book is regarded as an extravaganza, one may chuckle at the astrologer who, with the unpremeditated assistance of a descending—I hesitate to say fallen—angel, placed the first four horses in the Derby and thereby became a menace to bookmakers and the whole racing world. Mr. GRIFFITHS has also a happy knack of turning a phrase. But although several of the situations which this angelically-aided prophet had to face are amusingly described, the tale as a whole was for my taste too ridiculous to be entertaining. Mr. A. SAVORY'S illustrations are consistently clever.



"PARDON ME, SIR, BUT I RATHER THINK WE HAVE A CUSTOMER FOR THAT ONE."

Mr. A. SAVORY'S illustrations are consistently clever.

Apart from Mr. Punch's current volume there are a few standard works which may be described as indispensable. The Centenary Edition of *Burke's Landed Gentry*, which is easily heavy enough to press a pair of thick tweed trousers, is one. What exactly constitutes a Landed Gent may not be altogether clear, but anyone who fails to find his name in this book may be certain that he is not it. The disappointed will turn with renewed hope to *Who's Who*, 1937. The only possible criticism of this great work is that it could do with a little more blue-pencil. The excision of the innumerable titles of their utterly unimportant publications with which some of the illustrious obscure delight to aggrandise their entries would sensibly reduce the size of the book but not its value. Of the new *Whitaker's Almanack* nothing of importance can be said without quoting from its pages, for everything of importance is there. With equal ease you may find the distance to the Sun at perihelion or the Personal Income Tax Allowance of a Married Man. The former figure will as a matter of fact be found to be the greater.



HEIL, DEMOCRACY!

"Go away," said the Distinguished Personage abruptly from the depths of his armchair. "Leave me. I can see no one. I am for all practical purposes in camera."

"We know well," we said, glancing at his bedroom slippers and adjusting our notebook, "what a busy man you are and how little inclined, in common with many other great men of the age, to the giving of interviews. But we know too that it has never been your wont to disappoint the millions that hang upon your lightest word. Come, Sir, just a little New Year chat! The people clamour for it."

"I don't hear them," yawned the Personage. "Still, if it's a message to the masses you want, tell them this. Uplifted by the splendid traditions of my Past and strengthened by the sure knowledge of the superlative wit and wisdom that grace my Present, I shall ascend in the coming year to heights of humour undreamed of even in my philosophy. On the crest of a million happy laughs—"

"No, no," we begged, "no authoritarian utterances to-day, *please*. If you could just give us a few of your well-known sagacious comments on public affairs—not unilluminated, one hopes, by merry quips and sparkling *mots*—we should be more than satisfied."

"In the course of the last half-year," replied the other, breathing in an alarming way through his peculiar nose, "I have given to the public an astonishing number of jokes—many of them for the first time. Before the last word in my next volume is written I shall have thought up thousands more. Is it too much to ask for a few days' relaxation while the Old Year is dying and the New not yet born—a few days of blessed solemnity in which to restore my wasted tissues? Must I be for ever scintillating and twinkling like an infernal tea-tray in the sky? Pah! Be off with you!"

"Be as serious as you like, Sir. The humour is optional. Not a single crack—"

"Crack?"

"A vulgarism, possibly of American extraction, meaning witticism. Not a single crack—"

"Be good enough to say witticism if you mean witticism," interrupted the Personage sternly.

"Not a single witticism," we amended, somewhat huffed, "need mar the even flow of your discourse. But do let us get on. Talk to us about politics—Communism and Fascism, for instance. There's a nice gloomy subject for you."

"The more I see and hear of Communism and Fascism the more glad I am to belong to a country which

believes firmly in popular government. Our politicians may not be the cat's pyjamas"—we raised our eyebrows—"may not, ahem! be perfect, but at least we have the consolation of telling them so, a boon denied, I understand, to citizens of authoritarian states. Fascism for the Fascists, I say, and Communism for the Comrades, but a little dash of Liberty for you and me."

"Ha!" we said. "Excellent. The good old Eulogy of Democracy. Would it be too much to ask you to follow it up with a tribute to the magnificent spirit exhibited by the British Public during the stressful days of December? 'The fundamental good sense of the British people—,' see the Press, *passim*."

"I admit," he replied, "that our native modesty has not prevented the appearance of panegyrics on our own behaviour compared with which the Funeral Oration of PERICLES becomes an essay in damning with faint praise. But you must remember that the world apparently shares our good opinion of ourselves. And, after all, in an age when nations seem to find it increasingly hard to control themselves, the mere ability to keep calm does become something of a positive virtue. Besides, in this case we kept our heads under circumstances of particular difficulty and danger. And we have our reward."

"This is not the time to say very much about the sad ending of EDWARD VIII.'s short reign. When he left us he took with him qualities of mind and heart which we could ill spare, and we shall not forget him; but neither must we forget that he left behind him on the Throne a man with qualities even more valuable in a King and Emperor—those same qualities which made his father great. To KING GEORGE VI. and his QUEEN the Empire, never so firm a unity as now, looks up with affection and real confidence. We start 1937 a sound people."

"And strong too," we added.

"Well, getting stronger, anyway," the Personage agreed; "though it's all very confusing. One day I read that our new bombers are incomparably the fastest and most powerful in Europe, and the next I see that somebody has condemned them as hopelessly inferior to the sort of machines Germany was turning out by the million in 1934. Still, on the whole the signs are favourable. Didn't Italy give us quite a sweet answer about the Balearic Islands the other day? I can't help feeling that a few months ago her reply would have been more to the effect that 'Italy cannot tolerate any interference with the exercise of her national genius in the Mediterranean.' Of course the thing may have nothing to do with our rearmament. I am a child in these matters."

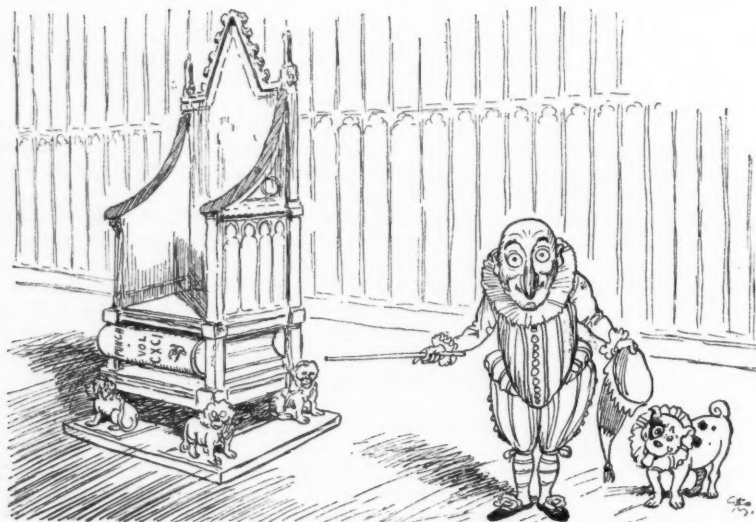
"Have you bought your seat for the Coronation?" we asked, to divert him from such dangerous topics.

"I have not. I am fairly comfortably off, thank you, but my resources are not endless. When the price of seats is reduced to a figure which gives a humble British citizen the chance to squeeze in between the ranks of American millionaires I shall do my best to buy one. Failing that I fear I shall have to be content with my own trifling share in the Ceremony at Westminster."

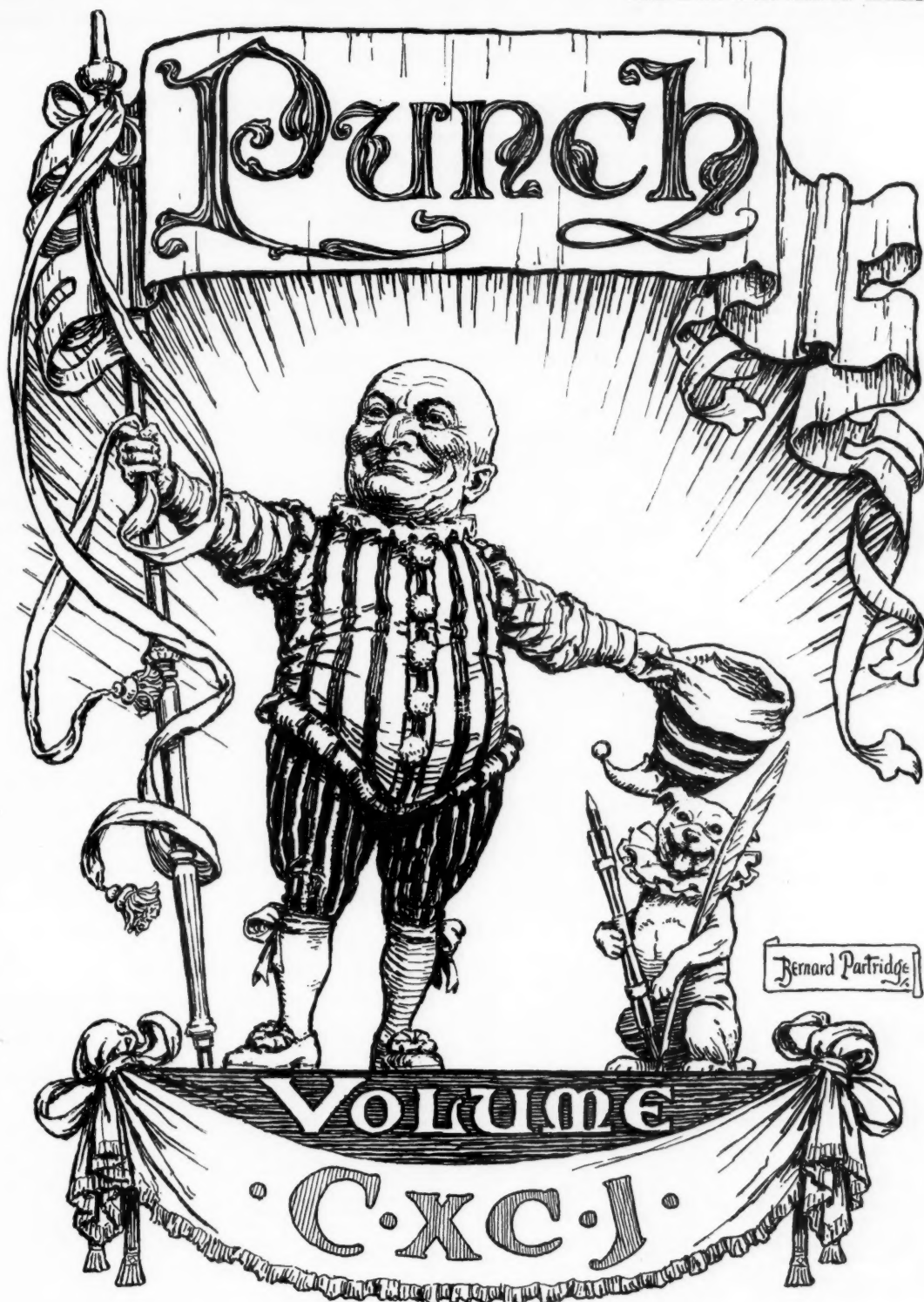
"You are officiating at the Abbey?" we asked in awe.

"Merely a small preliminary service," said the Personage airily, "which I plan to do for HIS MAJESTY. It has occurred to me that, in the event of any slight hitch or unforeseen delay in the ceremonial, HIS MAJESTY might be glad of something with which to occupy his mind. I therefore propose to place in a nook convenient to his hand the little booklet with which I usher in with respectful and loyal affection his Coronation Year. I mean, of course, my

One Hundred and Ninety-First Volume"



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